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SUBJECT: UNAMI TO REDUCE IRAQI STAFF BY 40%

Classified By: Political Consular Margaret Scobey for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

1.(C) On November 27 a United Nations Assistance Mission Iraq (UNAMI) official told PolOff that UN Special Representative to the Secretary General (SRSG) Ashraf Qazi would shortly send a cable to Headquarters UN recommending that UNAMI staffing in Iraq be reduced from 95 to 55 authorized positions as soon as possible. Under this recommendation, expected to be quickly adopted, the majority of these 40 reduced Iraqi positions and their current incumbents would be moved to Amman, Jordan, with a few primarily administrative positions to Kuwait, where they could continue to support UNAMI's efforts remotely. This realignment is expected to begin almost immediately and be completed within two weeks. (Comment: UNAMI currently has 91 staff members serving in Iraq meaning this realignment will immediately impact 36 incumbents, representing a 40% actual reduction in-country staff. PolOff has since confirmed that the cable from Qazi was sent November 27. End Comment.)

2.(C) According to the UNAMI official, under this proposed recommendation, the 55 remaining in-country positions will be made up of a 19-person safety and security section, 17 principles and primary staff, and 19 administrative and support personnel. The reduction in staffing does not affect the Fujian Military force currently providing UNAMI's primary standing security here under a separate UN agreement.

The overall recommendation for the staffing realignment to Jordan and Kuwait is based on security concerns driven by an increase in the levels of violence in the country. The decision was also strongly influenced by a much higher than expected contractor bid return estimate of 33 million USD to construct overhead protection for the housing trailers occupied by UNAMI staff in their IZ housing compound.

3.(SBU) On November 30, UNAMI Chief of Staff Fariz Zarif confirmed to PolOff that a realignment of staff to Jordan was under consideration by Headquarters UN which would reduce the staff in Iraq. Without providing details, Zarif emphasized to PolOff that such a realignment would not constitute a withdrawal or lessen the UN commitment to Iraq in any way. Zarif further stated that under the proposed withdrawal the SRSG retained the flexibility to move personnel in and out of the country as needed and that UNAMI was committed to maintaining sufficient key staff and expertise in Iraq to continue the programs and effort currently in place without significant impact.

¶4. (C) COMMENT: UNAMI staff members have privately expressed frustration at the security situation and inability to make progress on key issues on the ground in Iraq. They have reported recruiting and retention problems and concern that efforts at national reconciliation and constitutional reform have given UNMAI a pro-Sunni bias within the Shia population.

The 55 positions which remain in place should give UNAMI

sufficient manpower within Iraq to remain engaged and able to make a difference in areas where UN involvement is particularly critical such as constitutional reform, national reconciliation, progress toward elections and human rights.

Khalilzad